Notes from the Task Force on Faculty Roles & Responsibilities

Our fall interviews are well underway, and we are getting quite a bit of information out of them. We want to thank you for scheduling them and taking time to talk with us. If you have not scheduled one yet, we will be in contact shortly so we can attempt to get as many done as possible prior to the Interim break. As the interviews are very informal, we promise it will be a nice break from your hectic day!

Scheduling your Work

Many faculty came into academia with the notion that they have some flexibility in doing their work. They choose when their classes meet, when to arrive in the morning, and when to leave in the evening. Some even have the luxury of working from home on occasion. (Whether this is a luxury or a burden is up for debate.) However, your time is also filled with meetings, advising, office hours, and maybe you’ll get to that article that’s due next month. While this is all an inherent part of your job, you, and only you, can decide what priorities are in your life.

A recent blog by director Mike Monteiro of MuleDesign, a business and communications firm, highlights the trouble with the concept of traditional “meetings.” The problem, Monteiro says, is that people approach your work day as something to be filled rather than something from which time may be subtracted. “People don’t schedule their work,” he says. “They schedule the interruptions that prevent their work from happening.” Professors, on the other hand, might block out chunks of time that they are in the classroom, but do you ever schedule large chunks of time to work on that research you’ve been meaning to get to, or do you just wait for summer to get here? Click here for more information.

Supporting New Faculty

Mary Deane Soricelli of the University of Massachusetts offers the top 10 things new faculty would like to hear from colleagues in a teaching and learning forum newsletter. Number 1 on the list: “Remember, you are great.” You might be the new kid in town, but we wouldn’t have hired you if you didn’t have the potential of improving the department in some way. Sometimes it is too easy to forget that we are appreciated, so mentors, remember that your mentee might feel insecure and overwhelmed in his/her new environment. A word of praise can go a long way!

Work-life balance is traditionally thought of as a “woman’s problem,” but these days, men are stepping up to say, “We want balance too.” Because gender roles have shifted immensely over the course of the last two decades, it has not only developed more understanding between the sexes about the trials of the opposite, it has men seeking work-life balance along with women. The issue is especially a concern for those in careers that subscribe to the “ideal worker norm.” If you are unfamiliar with this term, pick up a copy of Dr. Robert Drago’s book in the Academic Affairs office; there are still a few complimentary copies left! In the meantime, click here to check out the article from BNET, the CBS Interactive Business Network fittingly titled “Work/Life Balance for Men.”

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~Mary Deane Soricelli, University of Massachusetts